

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 16355 01 OF 02 071331Z

53

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03 PRS-01

CU-02 AID-05 OMB-01 SCCT-01 /049 W

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R 071202Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9280

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC HONOLULU

DIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 16355

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, THE

SUBJECT: RURAL AGITATION AND RTG MOVES AGAINST  
ACTIVISTS

REF: A) BANGKOK A-182 5 JULY 74 (NOTAL)

B) FBIS BK 061712Z MAY 75 (NOTAL)

C) BANGKOK 5959 (NOTAL)

D) FBIS BK 061603Y AUG 75 (NOTAL)

E) FBIS BK 061000Y AUG 75 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: SINCE THE OCTOBER 1973 CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT,  
THAILAND HAS EXPERIENCED INCREASED AGITATION AMONG THE  
NORMALLY COMPLACENT RURAL PEASANTRY. STUDENT ACTIVISTS  
AND THE FARMER'S FEDERATION OF THAILAND (FFT) HAVE SPEARHEADED  
THIS AGITATION RECTNTLY, PUBLICIZED KILLINGS OF FFT  
MEMBERS HAVE COME TO THE NATION'S ATTENTION JUST AS  
LAMPHUN PROVINCE OFFICIALS ARRESTED FARMER AND STUDENT  
ACTIVISTS FOR VARIOUS MINOR VIOLATIONS STAMMING FROM AN  
INCIDENT LAST MAY. THE ACTIVIST NOW PORTRAY THEMSELVES  
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PAGE 02 BANGKO 16355 01 OF 02 071331Z

AS VICTIMS OF BOTH THE UNIDENTIFIED MURDERERS AND THE

GOVERNMENT. THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT FACES A SUBSTANTIAL DEMONSTRATION AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY IN SUPPORT OF THE LAMPHUN DEFENDANTS. THE DEMONSTRATORS HAVE A GOOD ISSUE AND WILL PROBABLY BE ABLE TO FORCE A GOVERNMENT COMPROMISE. OVER THE DETAINMENT OF THE ARRESTED ACTIVISTS. END SUMMARY

#### INTRODUCTION

1. ONE OF THE INEVITABLE RESULTS OF THAILAND'S DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENT IS INCREASED AGITATION AMONG THE GENERALLY COMPLACENT RURAL PEASANTRY. THE SPEARHEAD OF SUCH AGITATION HAS BEEN THE THAI STUDENT MOVEMENT. SINCE OCTOBER 1973 THE NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND HAS ACTED AS THE OMBUDSMAN FOR THE FARMERS. THIS CLOSE ASSOCIATION DEVELOPED FROM THE NSCT'S DEMOCRACY TEACHING PROGRAM AND BLOSSOMED DURING THE NSCT SPONSORED JUNE 1974 FARMER DEMONSTRATION IN BANGKOK (REF A).

2. OTHER, MORE LEFTIST, STUDENT GROUPS ALSO CONCERNED THEMSELVES WITH THE NSCT'S FARMER PROGRAMS RIGHT FROM THE BEGINNING. THE FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT STUDENTS OF THAILAND (FIST) ULTIMATELY TOOK OVER THE NSCT JUNE 1974 FARMERS DEMONSTRATION, RESULTING IN THE RESIGNATION OF THE MODERATE NSCT LEADERSHIP. FIST ALSO STAGED ANOTHER FARMER'S DEMONSTRATION IN BANGKOK IN LATE NOVEMBER 1974 (SEE BANGKOK 18965 OF 3 DECEMBER 1974).

3. ONE CONSEQUENCE OF THE LINK BETWEEN LEFTIST STUDENTS AND RURAL LEADERS, WAS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FARMERS FEDERATION OF THAILAND WHICH HELPED STAGE THESE TWO DEMONSTRATIONS. THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN THE FFT AND THE STUDENTS AGAIN BROUGHT A DEMONSTRATION TO BANGKOK BETWEEN 1-5 MAY 1975, SHORTLY AFTER THE GOVERNMENT OF KHUKRIT PRAMOT CAME TO OFFICE. THE GOVERNMENT ISSUED AN EXPRESSION OF ITS SYMPATHY WITH THE EIGHT FFT DEMANDS BUT SAID THE RTG WOULD ACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH ESTABLISHED PROCEDURES (REF B).

ASSASSINATION OF FARMER FEDERATION OF THAILAND LEADERS

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PAGE 03 BANGKO 16355 01 OF 02 071331Z

4. THE CHIANG MAI CONSUL REPORTS THAT SINCE MARCH 1975 SOME 14 FARMERS IN THE NORTH WHO WERE MEMBERS OF THE FFT HAVE BEEN MURDERED. POLICE HAVE YET TO SOLVE EVEN ONE CASE. SPECULATION ABOUT MOTIVES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE KILLINGS RUNS THE GAMUT. CHIANG MAI REPORTS THAT SOME SUSPECT THE POLICE AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ARE BEHIND THE KILLINGS. OTHERS BLAME IT ALL ON THE NEW STRENGTH (NAWAPHON) GROUP; OTHERS SAY IT IS THE WORK OF LAND-

LORDS. YET OTHERS BELIEVE THE FARMERS THEMSELVES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR KILLING THEIR LEADERS. CHIANG MAI CONCLUDES THAT NO ONE HAS YET COME UP WITH ANY PROOF THAT THERE IS, IN FACT, A CONSPIRACY AFOOT.

5. THE CHIANG MAI CONSUL REPORTS THAT, IN A CONVERSATION WITH A CONSULATE LOCAL, DOI SAKET CANTON CHIEF SITHON CHAREONSAP SAID THE TWO JUNE KILLINGS IN DOI SAKET DISTRICT OF CHIANG MAI PROVINCE WERE THE RESULT OF FARMERS FINDING OUT THAT THE VICTIMS WERE QUITTING THE FFT. THIS LED THEM TO BELIEVE THAT BOTH HAD JOINED FFT RANKS AS GOVERNMENT AGENTS.

6. CHIANG MAI ALSO REPORTS THAT MANY FARMERS, WHO WERE TALKED INTO MEMBERSHIP WITH GRANDIOSE PROMISES, ARE NOW DISILLUSIONED AND WONDERING WHAT HAPPENED TO THEIR FEES. INTA SIBUNROENG, FFT VICE PRESIDENT MURDERED JULY 30, WAS NOT BELOVED AMONG ALL HIS PEERS. THE FIRST AND ONLY EDITION OF HIS NEWSPAPER WAS EXTREMELY FAR LEFT AND, GIVEN THE MAN'S LIMITED EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENTS, IT WAS RUMORED IN THE NORTH THAT HE HAD THE SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THAILAND.

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 16355 02 OF 02 071341Z

53

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03 CIAE-00

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 16355

THE ARREST OF FARMER AND STUDENT ACTIVISTS

7. THE GOVERNOR OF LAMPHUN HAS ANNOUNCED THAT NINE FARMER AND STUDENT ACTIVISTS WORKING IN HIS PROVINCE WERE ARRESTED ON 3 AUGUST 1975. ONE OF THOSE ARRESTED WAS BUNMA ARI, PRESIDENT OF THE FFT. THE CHARGES STEM PRIMARILY FROM A THREE MONTH OLD INCIDENT IN WHICH THE ACTIVISTS LEAD A FARMER DEMONSTRATION AGAINST A MINING OPERATION IN LAMPHUN. GOVERNOR BANLOM PHUCHONGKAKUN, NOT ONE OF THE MORE SOPHISTICATED PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATORS, HAS THUS GIVEN THE NATION'S LEFTISTS A GOOD ISSUE.

8. AFTER THE ARRESTS OF THE ACTIVISTS, DEPUTY POLICE DIRECTOR GENERAL, POLICE MAJOR GENERAL MONCHAI PUNKONGCHUEN, WHO PLAYED THE VILLIAN'S ROLE DURING THE OCTOBER 1973 VIOLENCE, ANNOUNCED TO THE PRESS THAT HE PERSONALLY ORDERED THE ARRESTS WITHOUT CLEARING THE CASE WITH HIS SUPERIORS. A SIMILAR POLICE INITIATIVE IN NAKHON SI THAMMARAT PROVINCE IN EARLY APRIL 1975 ALSO CAUGHT THE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 16355 02 OF 02 071341Z

CABINET UNAWARE AND RESULTED IN A SYMPATHETIC STUDENT DEMONSTRATION WHICH ULTIMATELY SECURED THE RELEASE OF THE DEFENDANTS (REF. C).

RESPONSE TO THE ARRESTS

9. THE DEMOCRAT PARTY AND THREE OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE CRITICIZED THE GOVERNMENT OVER THE ARRESTS OF THE FARMER AND STUDENT ACTIVISTS. THE CABINET HAS ALLOWED THE OPPOSITION TO RAISE A PARLIAMENTARY INTERPELLATION ON THE ARRESTS AT THE ASSEMBLY'S AUGUST 14 MEETING.

10. THE NSCT AND STUDENT ACTIVISTS IN BANGKOK HAVE REACTED SHARPLY TO THE UNSOLVED MURDERS AND THE UNTIMELY ARRESTS OF FARMER AND STUDENT ACTIVISTS. PROBABLY WITH A THOUGHT OF THE SUCCESS OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS WHICH SECURED THE RELEASE OF THE NAKHON SI THAMMARAT DEFENDANTS, THE BANGKOK STUDENTS HAVE PUT TOGETHER A SIZEABLE RALLY AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY. THEY HAVE SUCH A GOOD ISSUE THAT THE THAMMASAT STUDENT GOVERNMENT HAS VOTED TO SUSPEND CLASSES (REF D). A SIMILAR RESPONSE HAS COME FROM THE STUDENTS AT CHIANG MAI UNIVERSITY. THESE RALLIES HAVE A GOOD HEAD OF STEAM AND WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE UNTIL THE GOVERNMENT MAKES SOME CONCESSION. KHUKRIT, HOWEVER, IS MAINTAINING A LAW AND ORDER STANCE AND HAS NOT YET MOVED TOWARD SUCH A CONCESSION (REF E).

11. COMMENTS: THIS IS THE SECOND TIME THAT PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT HAS HAD TO DEAL WITH AN ACTIVIST DEMONSTRATION WHICH THE POLICE SPARKED FOR HIM. HE HAS FORBORN FROM SAYING WHETHER HE APPRECIATES THE HELP. THE BANGKOK STUDENT RALLY AT THAMMASAT FOLLOWS A PREDICTABLE PATTERN. THE RTG CAN EXPECT THAT THE RALLY WILL GROW AND CONTINUE UNTIL SOME FACESAVING COMPROMISE, PROBABLY INVOLVING THE RELEASE OF THE NINE ARRESTED ACTIVISTS, EVENTUATES. WHILE THE STABILITY OF THE CABINET IS NOT YET AT STAKE, CONSERVATIVE INTERFERENCE, PERHAPS BY THE RED GAUR, WITH THE ACTIVIST RALLY AT THAMMASAT COULD GENERATE A NEW SET OF PROBLEMS FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

12. MEANWHILE, IT IS BY NO MEANS CLEAR WHO IS RESPONSIBLE  
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PAGE 03 BANGKO 16355 02 OF 02 071341Z

FOR THE RECENT RASH OF KILLINGS IN THE NORTH WHICH HAVE CLAIMED THE LIVES OF UP TO 14 FFT MEMBERS. ANY AGITATION AMONG THE RURAL PEASANTRY OBVIOUSLY WILL RAISE SOME CONSERVATIVE OPPOSITION. THE FFT MOVEMENT ITSELF ALSO HAS ITS OWN INTERNAL PROBLEMS, AND THERE IS A MUTUAL DISTRUST BETWEEN THE STUDENTS AND THE FARMERS. RADICAL STATEMENTS FROM THE AGITATORS COULD ALSO RAISE A REACTION FROM THE CONSERVATIVE PEASANTRY. IN ANY CASE, THE PRESENT FUSS IN BANGKOK WILL PROBABLY OBSCURE THE ROOT CAUSES OF THESE KILLINGS.  
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